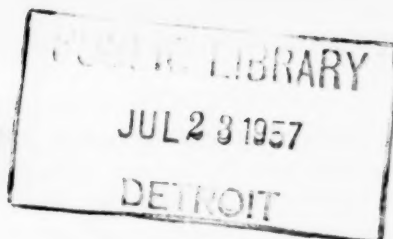


PHILOSOPHY,  
RELIGION AND  
EDUCATION

# CHRISTIANITY and CRISIS

*A Christian Journal of Opinion*



## Mao Tse-tung: Heir or Heretic?

The publication of Mao Tse-tung's secret speeches to the Chinese Communist Party congress has focused the attention of the world upon the Chinese leader. The question is whether, while Khrushchev may have succeeded Stalin in Russia, Mao may not be successfully claiming the possession of Lenin's mantle as the chief prophet of world Communism. Khrushchev, in his TV interview, sought to confine Mao's interpretations to China and committed himself to the absurdity that in Russia the "contradictions" between the "rulers" and the "people" did not exist. This observation was edited out of the text published in Russia, for it would obviously arouse cynical reactions, particularly among the Russian university students who are growing increasingly restive under the dictatorship.

The obvious fact is that the very distinction between the rulers and the people is heretical from the standpoint of Communist orthodoxy and yet in accord with universal experience. Mao's admission that there is a possibility of contradiction between the bureaucracy of the Communist state and the workers and that workers may have to strike for the sake of justice, hits at the heart of Communist utopian illusions. These are based on the assumption that once property distinctions vanish, there is an identity of interest between all citizens, no matter how great the distinctions of power may be between them.

Mao's heresies are so significant and may be so creative in leavening the lump of Communist or-

thodoxy that one may well raise the question whether Mao retains any of the orthodox dogmas of Communism. The answer is that he does. He is not the Martin Luther of the Communist faith, though he may be something of an Erasmus. He makes a simple distinction between "the people" and "enemies of the people" which is in accord with the Communist black and white distinction of the class war. He cheerfully acknowledges that the Chinese regime killed eight hundred thousand "enemies of the people" in the process of consolidating its power. Even his plea to "Let a hundred flowers blossom" is meant for the Party and is in accord with Lenin's "democratic centralism." It offers no hope for a multi-party democracy, for, in regard to the dictatorship of the workers through the Party, Mao is a strict Communist.

Even his plea for persuasion rather than force must be viewed in light of the very great achievements of Chinese Communism in bringing psychological, rather than physical, torture to bear upon the recalcitrant members of the people's democracy. If one translates persuasion into "brain-washing" and recognizes the tremendous adeptness of the Chinese Communists in this latter form of torture, one will not have too optimistic views of the disintegration of the Communist power system.

Nevertheless, Mao's heresies are important. They represent heresies rather than apostasies, but they may cumulate and destroy the basis of Communist orthodoxy.

R.N.

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## THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

A DECISIVE STEP in the merging of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches into the United Church of Christ was taken at Cleveland, Ohio, June 25-27 as the two bodies met in a uniting synod. Nearly seven hundred delegates and a large number of associate delegates and visitors were present as the declaration of intention to unite was celebrated and various actions were taken looking toward the union of the boards and commissions of the two groups. A commission to prepare a constitution for the United Church and a commission to prepare a statement of faith were appointed, since the principle of the merger had been accepted that the union would be formed first and the United Church would establish its own constitution.

For this observer, the moment of union drew additional significance from the fact that the road to it has not been an easy one. Especially on the Congregational side, through a long series of criticisms and court actions which are by no means over, a rather small but vigorous group of individuals and churches has asserted that the contemplated merger destroys the historic freedom and local autonomy of Congregationalism. The dissenting group was not unrepresented at the Cleveland meeting, but no votes were cast against the uniting action. New attacks on the merger through the courts have been filed, and there are undoubtedly many years of continued litigation and other difficulty ahead in some quarters. All of this background contributed to the feeling, which was uppermost in the minds of many, that the creation of a new body in the spirit of Christian unity is a venture of faith and requires an ever deeper grasp of those imperatives in the Christian gospel in obedience to which new forms of the church are being found.

A large number of fraternal delegates from other denominations contributed to the sense of new hope brought about by this action. They welcomed the demonstration that the will to be one can find a way through difficulties.

Much has been made of the issue of freedom by some opponents of the merger. Surely freedom to respond to the new demands of the Holy Spirit in a new age is of the essence of Christian faith. The freedom merely to remain immobile would

seem to be of dubious significance in our time or at any time.

High points of the recent meeting were addresses by Bishop Lesslie Newbigin and Dr. Truman Douglas, both of which sharply stated that the creation of the United Church ought to be a call to bring all traditions under the criticism of the Christ who calls for a newer and more adequate body in his service. If the new church responds with vitality and determination in that spirit, it will demonstrate what Christian freedom is.

DANIEL DAY WILLIAMS

## REPORT ON HUNGARY

THE REPORT of the United Nations fact-finding committee on Hungary, which was appointed to investigate the Russian suppression of the Hungarian revolution, is one of the most heartening documents of these troublous times. Immediately after the Russian terror had put down the Hungarian patriots, there was much talk about the possibility of bringing "moral influence" to bear on Russia. This talk was received with a good deal of cynicism by those who knew that the power system of Communism, secure in its own ideological fortifications, was not likely to be amenable to moral influence.

But the committee report, by its detailed and dispassionate statement of the events in Hungary, has given us a form of moral influence which, while it may not sway the Russians, is bound to affect opinion in the uncommitted countries. The committee was composed of representatives of small nations, including some uncommitted nations: Australia, Denmark, Ceylon, Tunisia, and Uruguay.

The report established the partly guessed horrendous facts. The Hungarian government never asked for the suppression of the rebellion. Prime Minister Imre Nagy, who was head of the nation in its brief hour of freedom and has since been imprisoned by the Russians in violation of a promise of safe-conduct, was a prisoner of the Russians during a portion of his premiership. The most astounding fact was that the Russians arrested the whole of the Hungarian military command whom they had invited for a ceremonial dinner.

The report will not give Hungary its freedom, but it will do much to destroy the waning prestige of Russia and to enhance the prestige of the United Nations.

R.N.

# Ethical Foundations of the Law: A New Interpretation

DANIEL DAY WILLIAMS

RECENT DECISIONS of the Supreme Court on segregation and the rights of witnesses before Congressional committees have brought to the fore again issues concerning the delicate balance which the Constitution and the Supreme Court preserve in the American system. Mr. Roosevelt discovered how much power the Court could wield against the manifest needs of social change. Now the Court, having taken an advanced position on racial segregation, finds its decisions threatened with nullification in certain states, and its decision protecting the rights of witnesses before Congressional committees has called forth a rather surprising degree of questioning and criticism.

Beyond these specific issues lie the questions of democratic justice, the source of ultimate power to determine and enforce the law, and the effectiveness of legal remedies for social ills. Protestant theology has been singularly ineffective in interpreting the relation of Christian faith to the legal process. Protestant orthodoxy was unable to anticipate the nature of democratic processes. Neither Calvinism, nor Lutheranism, nor sectarian theories developed an adequate philosophy of culture and of the State. Liberal theology tended to brush past the complications of legal procedure, either with ethical generalities or with radical programs of social reconstruction. In recent times the neo-orthodox movement on the Continent has, as Emil Brunner has shown, tried unsuccessfully to draw all the principles of justice and political order from Christology. Roman Catholic thought appears, in contrast, to be imposing in its long tradition of natural law theory. Lawyers often report, after meetings of legal theorists in America, that the Roman Catholics appear to offer the only integrated alternative to a purely pragmatic doctrine of the foundations of justice.

## Insight from Mr. Cahn

In this situation, Protestants seeking a meeting of theology and legal philosophy would do well to take careful notice of two books recently published by Professor Edmond Cahn of the New York University School of Law: *The Sense of Injustice: An Anthropocentric View of the Law*,<sup>1</sup> and *The Moral Decision: Right and Wrong in the Light of Ameri-*

*can Law*.<sup>2</sup> Professor Cahn has three main things to say, if one may briefly summarize his argument. First, American legal experience and practice throws a penetrating light on ultimate issues of right and wrong. Second, there is a foundation in human nature itself for the establishment and progressive refinement of ethical principles. Third, we are entitled to a certain optimism about the increasing sensitivity to higher human values within the democratic legal process. Here then is an approach to ethics which draws upon the experience of the courts, of litigants, and of a community which must refine its definition of rights and obligations in order to survive. Cahn believes that when we examine "the imprint of legal process upon morals" we see the advance of the sense of injustice toward a more humane and interdependent human community. Because he finds the basis for ethical decision in a dynamic human nature achieving active adjustment in a complex and fluid community he offers insight which a Protestant alternative to traditional natural law theory needs.

Since the two books adopt somewhat different methods of analysis it will be necessary to deal with each in turn; but at the outset it must be said that in both books the method and style of exposition are not only unusual but in their complexity reflect Cahn's argument that legal and moral questions interact upon one another. These are neither purely legal treatises nor moral essays, but both at the same time. Nothing but the reading can convey the extraordinary wealth of humanistic learning, pungent insight, barbed and ironic commentary, and the gentle humaneness of these books. Cahn is wonderfully at home in the whole Bible and in the rabbinic tradition. The decision in a damage suit in Ohio may lead him to reflections illuminated by quotations from Dante, Spinoza, or Kierkegaard. His prose is so graceful, urbane and intricately balanced that one reads not only with delight but with the realization that sentence after sentence contains occasion for sustained reflection. Consider this passage on the judge:

The judge is thus an emblem of democratic solidarity; his office is the symbol of the public conscience creating acts of justice. Even his limitations and imperfections, if they be honorable and candid

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<sup>1</sup> *The Sense of Injustice*, New York University Press, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> *The Moral Decision*, Indiana University Press, 1955.



are tokens of solidarity, for they too are generic. The wholly righteous judge is a figure of myth, literally false but replete with the truth of aspiration and resolution.<sup>3</sup>

### An Essay on Legal Philosophy

This remark about Cahn's style is a necessary warning that the summary now given will certainly be inadequate; but I shall try to outline the thesis as I understand it, first as it is stated in *The Sense of Injustice*, which is an essay on legal philosophy and refers only incidentally to specific cases.

Cahn finds what might be called a biological foundation for ethics in the sense of injustice, for it is rooted in a defense mechanism:

The sense of injustice . . . denotes that sympathetic reaction of outrage, horror, shock, resentment, and anger, those affections of the viscera and abnormal secretion of the adrenals that prepare the human animal to resist attack. . . . Nature has thus equipped all men to regard injustice to another as a personal aggression.<sup>4</sup>

Reason enters as the demand and function which takes into account all the relevant factors. Thus the sense of injustice is "an indissociable blend of reason and empathy."<sup>5</sup>

The experience of society proves that "justice as a working process creates its own cumulative rewards in every emergent occasion. Among these are freedom, cohesion, and mutual confidence." But there is a warning. "We are offered no categorical warranty; how amid the ways of this world should we come to the state of expecting one? There is only the certain opportunity that men may, through exercise of the sense of injustice, draw closer and become everywhere increasingly secure."<sup>6</sup>

The analysis in *The Sense of Injustice* concerns the way in which in American law the concepts of justice and power, freedom and order, security and change have been held in a kind of polar tension through a continuing judicial appraisal of the terms upon which men can live together peaceably and honorably. What Cahn is most concerned to point out is the extension through the law of the opportunity for social mobility, horizontal and vertical, the recognition that "neighbors are the chief factors in men's environment," and the progressive limitation of liability so that men may move freely within the activities which contribute to their good and

that of the community. But throughout the argument Cahn stresses the inexhaustible and dynamic character of human experience. There are many factors operative in the decisions which men make.

The sense of injustice is only one of the several causes that are *constitutive* particular answers; to find it permanently *constituted* in any single answer or series of answers. . . . (not excluding such as may have been proffered in these pages) is to betray it.<sup>7</sup>

That sentence states Cahn's explicit rejection of natural law theory. It is surely in harmony with a Protestant view of the radical character of ethical decision made in the light of God's specific demands in concrete situations which cannot be adequately defined in any formulation of natural law.

### The Nature of Moral Decision

Having developed this foundation for legal judgments, Cahn turns first in *The Moral Decision* to a discussion of the specific ways in which the process of arriving at those judgments makes its "imprint" upon our moral decisions. These include the mode of trial, the professional discipline of the lawyers and the lawmakers, the social function of the decision making on the part of the courts, and the control over official force with its correlative of judicial self-restraint. Cahn goes on to point out the peculiar risks and difficulties of legal decision, but he believes the fundamental process is indispensable in those ways.

After this initial discussion, Cahn goes on to analyze the moral questions involved in a series of human problems from birth to death, with sex and the family, property, the rights of artists, the modes of trial and public discussion all brought under scrutiny. Each discussion here is introduced by a specific case, and Cahn so uses the cases as to demonstrate his thesis that legal decision gives "an opportunity to discover an entire spectrum of hidden moral interests and values."<sup>8</sup> In the cases dealing with the family, Cahn traces the origins of American marriage law in puritanism and mercantilism. He shows how the gradual process of judicial decision has whittled away at the mercantilist theories and has brought a new series of more humane and less merely economic values to the fore.

It is impossible to review here all these discussions which not only interpret what the courts have been doing but which lead to penetrating

<sup>3</sup> *The Sense of Injustice*, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>8</sup> *The Moral Decision*, p. 52.

reflections on human responsibility for everything from death to taxes, What emerges from the whole is the nature of moral decision itself; and it is here that Cahn completes the philosophy stated in the earlier volume, for it becomes clear that when courts, or individuals must judge concerning "moral character," a personal decision is involved. As Cahn states it:

When various groups in the community present a number of diverse or opposing attitudes, there is as affirmative an act of personal enterprise and moral commitment in *selecting* one perspective from the available many as in *establishing* a perspective which one believes to be entirely original.<sup>9</sup>

Notice that Cahn does not place the following of judicial precedent on the same level as discovery of the viable moral perspective in the conscience of the community. In fact, the whole question of the principle of *stare decisis* and its moral implications is one source of moral dilemmas confronting judges which he seems to leave in the background. But this only means, I take it, that he holds the actual situation for the judge is one in which the mere fact of "its having been decided" cannot be morally decisive.

### Some Theological Questions

To make a brief theological comment on such a mature philosophy without extensive argument is surely to run the risk of appearing to introduce merely pious platitudes. Yet I must take that risk, for it seems to me that Professor Cahn's work does not go far enough in two specific aspects of the ethical problem.

First, for all the criticism which he levels at the courts and legal process, he does not quite bring the moral situation into proper focus because he does not sufficiently deal with the extralegal context in which the process takes place. He says in one place, "Due process of law is the ultimate elixir, and if it fails, everything fails."<sup>10</sup> But of course, he must continue,

Though due process be the foundation of individual rights, it too requires an enduring bedrock on which to rest. There are presuppositions involved concerning the nature of man and truth, which confer on mobility its functional preeminence.<sup>11</sup>

Precisely. But the task of discovering, establishing, and making effective those presuppositions requires the development of a level of moral insight in the community which cannot be derived

from the judicial process alone. Theologically speaking, we have to say it requires a community of faith. Cahn cites a tragic miscarriage of justice in a case involving the murder by white men of a Negro in South Carolina and says, "It is not clear whether the caliber of the jury or the weakness of the prosecution's presentation was responsible for this miscarriage."<sup>12</sup> It is a social situation with its hysterias and its angry men able to do what they will regardless of courts or law. In short, I suggest that Cahn tends to trust the judicial process in itself to produce justice without his sufficiently recognizing the extent to which the process depends upon the moral climate at the centers of power in the community. In his comment on the Supreme Court decision on segregation he makes some relevant points about the significance of the Court's allowing time for the carrying out of its decree, but surely recent history proves that gradualism alone is far from enough to prevent a rejection and nullification of the effect of the decision. It is interesting to observe also that the right of trial by jury, so important a part of due process, is now being used by some southern interests as a means to circumvent constitutional guarantees of the rights of citizens to vote. Professor Cahn is aware of these ambiguities. I am not sure their implications are fully faced in these volumes.

My second question directed to his position is closely related to the first. It has to do with these presuppositions about the nature of man upon which due process rests. Are these merely rational principles, or are they dictated by biological necessity, or, as they enter in the moral decision, are they not reflections of faith? Does not the sense of injustice rest upon a conviction as to the nature of life itself. If so, the theological question is raised. Which is the final source of moral obligation, human nature or the Creator and Redeemer of human nature? Professor Cahn's own doctrine appears to be a humanism which includes elements of epicureanism and stoicism. Is this enough?

From a Christian point of view one must agree that man finds within himself a moral demand to which in some measure he can respond. That is the *imago dei*. But it is the image of God in man, not merely a self-image. Thus the question is raised whether the sense of injustice can really be maintained apart from faith in an ultimate justice. Perhaps Professor Cahn does not mean to say that it can be so maintained. I am not sure. In any case he has provided an interpretation of the law which is badly needed.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 87, see especially note 30.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 305.

<sup>10</sup> The Sense of Injustice, p. 85.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 87.

# DRAMA

## THE CHRISTIAN AS CRITIC

Periodically the Christian is asked to evaluate a work of art that depicts life in terms of despair, brutality, disunity, degradation or meaninglessness. Tennessee Williams provided grist for the mill with *Baby Doll* and, more recently, with the old drama he reworked into *Orpheus Descending*.

Reviews of this play ranged from general praise to the witty devastation of the *Harper's* commentary titled, "Morpheus Descending." The setting is a general store in a small southern community. The supporting characters are ignorant and often cruel. The few explicit references to religion suggest a hysterical religiosity. All the characters live lives that are ultimately sterile and meaningless. The plight of the central characters is that they know it. But they never seem to strike deeply into the sources of life and behavior in their passion and probing. The result is a certain repetitiousness. The third act degenerates into melodrama.

A few ideas are expressed with lyrical intensity by a girl who started as a compassionate humanitarian and has now been perverted into one who takes her revenge on society by being a "lewd exhibitionist." The Orpheus figure in the play, symbol of inspiration, arrives in a snakeskin jacket and finally gives the answer to his questioning about the meaning of life: "corruption!"

At this point the critic, secular or Christian, can go on to further exposition and argue his verdict of the play as a work of art. After this the secular critic has about had it. For he is usually tied to the honorifics and "intellectually respectable" ideas of his age—and perhaps, like much of his audience, submerged in them. But the Christian critic is not so bound; he usually feels compelled to evaluate such works further, and should have an advantage in doing so.

Unfortunately, as Robert Fitch pointed out in these pages, (April 29, 1957), the Christian critic often tends to react in one of two ways to the artistic portrayals of meaninglessness and degradation of soul. He may belabor the struggling artist with the bent crowbar of Puritan righteousness, or he may adopt the prevailing view of secular critics in what sometimes seems a pitiful attempt to appear intellectually respectable.

Another reaction is suggested in Malcolm Boyd's idea of "negative witness" and was evidenced in Dean James A. Pike's discussion of *Baby Doll* as an effective portrayal of the consequences of sin. The difficulty with this approach is that it assumes a general acknowledgement of positive witness—a standard of morality that is generally recognized and compelling.

This is hardly the case in our culture where we ascribe different standards of morality to different areas—the movie star can philander but the teacher cannot, a lad who is treated for juvenile

delinquency as though for a sickness is condemned as a criminal when past an arbitrary age; it is usually wrong to cheat except on expense accounts or taxes; thousands of whites who cry "Lord, Lord" will not let a Negro in their church, and so on through a network of multiple standards. The situation is complicated by artistic works and television dreadfuls suggesting alternative standards of behavior. Debauchery and violence may be given positive appeal; their condemnation may be condemned as negative, and meantime we continue to worship an assortment of gods from the Lord God through national or corporate power to the platitudes of superficial happiness (or despair, for a few).

The negative witness apology is insufficient in itself, and it is no use averting our eyes in a funk of impotence or condemning the works as "dishonest." The contrary is often true in an important but limited sense. To understand this, the works should be placed in what we will term the Christian perspective, which for critical purposes consists of two interwoven insights. One is a sense of human history, a sense of the spiritual orientation and dominant maladies of an age. This should be coupled with the Christian view of man as a creature of free will ultimately related to God and capable of degradation or of great dignity, particularly when possessed with an existential knowledge of the love of God.

The completely contingent, ordered universe of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, reverberating throughout when the king was slain, was undercut by such factors as Copernican astronomy and reformed on the less compelling level of Pope's "mighty maze, but not without a plan," which in turn gave way to the mysticism of a Blake and the Wordsworth who apprehended in nature "a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused," until the romantic vision and American Transcendentalism petered out and were undercut by factors including Darwinism, giving rise to the humanist exaltation of man and social progress and to the schools of disillusionment and even nihilism that increasingly expressed the lack of spiritual foundations.

The Dadaists, hanging their paintings in the toilets, put a grotesque little period at the end of the general catholic view of the universe. The "dissociation of sensibility" within the individual is now matched by a sense of disconnection between the individual and any deep rivers of belief and shared experience. There is plenty of communication in our popular refuge of democratic conformism but little communion.

Art is the expression of a sensibility in contact with experience. The expression is conditioned by the artist's perspective, the milieu of his culture, and usually is placed in the framework of current critical standards. Today the artist who delves into experience often finds the situation suggested in the above paragraphs, and may sense what Paul Tillich terms the "anxiety of meaninglessness" underlying much of modern life. He gives his insights an expression that may speak to

Mr. Rowland is a journalist who lives in New York and frequently writes on religious subjects.



those who sense and acknowledge the situation, miss those who do not sense it, and revolt those who sense but do not acknowledge it. Whether the Christian likes these works or not, he should understand them and their sources in modern life if he is to make a relevant reply.

Sometimes the meaninglessness is explicit in a character, and it is expressed in modern paintings that break up the human figure into unrelated blobs: the artist has delved and found no center, no core of meaning and being. Or as MacLeish put it in poetry, behind everything lies "the pall/ of nothing, nothing, nothing at all." More often the meaninglessness may be implicit in modern literature, hidden frequently beneath the passion and cruelty of the characters, as in *Orpheus Descending*, where it is important in the heroine's expression of the sterility and degradation of her life. This she communicates for all to hear, but we get little sense of real communion.

It is the sense of disconnection and the underlying note of meaninglessness that make many modern works seem a bit "private," and this sense is heightened by the artist studying his characters somewhat apart from the mainstream of society, perhaps to facilitate a search for communion and meaning. Sometimes these are found. In Hemingway, courage and deep personal loyalty, understanding of shared experience, provide a basis for communion. The lost vision of J. Alfred Prufrock returns on a deeper level when Eliot probes toward the Source of meaning "at the still point of the turning world." In some works meaning may even be demanded—"attention must be paid!" to the death of Willie Loman in *Death of a Salesman*. In Faulkner we see a moral conscience ruthlessly exposing the results of social and human wrongs in a southern society that has quite broken down in the same sense that Toynbee applies the term to civilizations.

Faulkner with his Snopes clan and Williams with his "lewd exhibitionist" are actually saying, in their different ways, some of what Billy Graham and a dozen others have said, for these characters are the cry of an artist against the wrongs, the stupid meanness, the creative emptiness, the ingrown idolotry—the sin—of society. Amen, the secular critic will say.

But the Christian critic should go on to point out that the once decent impulses of the "lewd exhibitionist" were apparently founded on nothing more than youthful sentimentality, which itself is a result of spiritual weakness, and compares rather badly with the spiritual strength of the fictional characters of *A Land Beyond the River* or the real ones at Koinonia Farm. In Faulkner we can see southern characters who are doomed to degradation in an almost predestinarian way because of the exploitation of men and land by their ancestors. The Christian critic should point out that there is also salvation. The Snopes may be an uncomfortable truth about society. But they are answered by a Martin Luther King.

In sum, many modern artists are simply expressing the spiritual maladies that plague us in an age when the unifying, catholic vision has been lost:

men have turned from God or reduced him to a gimmick for success or shallow defensiveness, and our civilization is being reformed and may have broken down, again as Toynbee uses the term. What has been said above does not, of course, explain all modern work or all the work of the artists so briefly mentioned. But it should help give an understanding and an approach. From a Christian perspective it can be seen that many modern works depend rather heavily on spiritual maladies of our age in a particular context, and tend to lack much strength beyond this. Their limited truths should not go unappreciated, or undefined or unanswered.

There is an answer in the vision that transcends space and time but finds existential reality in them—in a Martin Luther King or a Trevor Huddleston, for example. That vision contains material for evocative modern drama, as is shown in *A Land Beyond the River*. The churches should foster such works that delve into experience and find meaning and communion between man and God, and man and man. The Christian as critic can accept artistic statements of spiritual sickness without accepting their view of man. We should place them in perspective, and counter with the larger view of man that finds its meaning in the Source of meaning.

STANLEY ROWLAND, JR.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Mr. Fitch Replies to Mr. Driver

TO THE EDITORS: Because of the many differences between Mr. Driver ("Literary Criticism and the Christian Conscience: A Reply to Mr. Fitch," July 8, 1957) and myself, and because of the monstrous perversions of what I am trying to say that he has offered in his essay, I must pass over most of it in silence. For the present, there are just two things worth saying:

(1) Mr. Driver thinks that literature should be a mirror of the life of the times. I think that literature, in Mathew Arnold's sense, is a criticism of life. I can't conceive the reflections of a mirror to be in any sense a work of art. I assume that the task of the artist is to select, to order, and to interpret; that the great artist sees everything from a perspective which is his own; that it is the business of the critic to consider that perspective and the meanings which it celebrates. Surely to ignore this selective and interpretive role of the artist is to make literary criticism a futile exercise.

(2) I find it highly ironical that the first and most savage assault on me for puritanism and obscurantism should come not from a secular source, but from a Christian source. It was a secular critic, Leslie Fiedler, who first gave me courage to speak up about Hemingway. It was a secular journal, *The New Republic*, which first published the severest chapter in my *Decline and Fall of Sex*. It has been secular critics like Charles Rolo in *The Atlantic*, Leslie Hanscom in the *World-Telegram*, and Marya Mannes in *The Reporter* who have welcomed with enthusiasm what

I had to say. It remained for a professional theologian to denounce me for being a prurient prude. Is it really possible that, in this matter of sexuality in literature, the secular critics are ahead of the allegedly Christian critics in Christian insight and in Christian courage?

It is true that there is one delusion under which I have been laboring. When I read Mr. Driver's pieces in *The Christian Century*, I had thought that he was trying to function as what might be called a "Christian critic." But since Mr. Driver rejects that "abominable phrase," and since his hatchet job on my book demonstrates the sincerity of his distaste for such a title, I mean hereafter to dissociate him from any such distinction. Nevertheless, I am still hopeful that there are many within the church who will be willing to acknowledge that there can be such a person as the Christian critic in literature as they have come to concede that there can be a Christian critic in politics and economics.

ROBERT E. FITCH  
Berkeley, California

*The attentive reader of my article will observe that I do not think simply that "literature should be a mirror of the life of the times." But it is partly so. Novelists and playwrights rightly tend to be involved with life as it is. Their selecting, ordering, and interpreting must emerge after and through such involvement. It is Mr. Fitch's failure to allow for this kind of involvement which is regrettable.*

*I am disturbed by Mr. Fitch's sharp dichotomy between Christian and secular. (Incidentally, not all the "secular" critics endorse his book: see *The Nation*, June 22, 1957). It is for that reason I wince at the phrase, "Christian critic." If the phrase meant simply "a critic who is a Christian," well and good. But the phrase usually implies that there are specifically "Christian" canons of literary criticism, separate from "secular" ones. If there be such, which I doubt—for every "Christian" judgment is intermixed with "secular" ones—then they are so difficult to define and so little understood that the phrase can lead only to pomposity cloaking ambiguity. Christianity is a pressure brought to bear upon all our tenuous and relative judgments, not a ready-made formula which would prejudice every decision.*

TOM F. DRIVER

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TO THE EDITORS: Since a moral and Christian writer peoples his work with affirmations of "abundant life," T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden (to mention only two contemporaries) are out of the state of grace. Their characters, by and large, have neither "strong moral convictions" nor "strong passions;" sexual lust is not, in the boisterous fashion of Chaucer, "made the comic and pathetic symbol of a larger lust for the life abundant." And of course, comic and pathetic symbols aren't really worth a critic's favor unless they express this lust for abundant living. Mere sickly yearning for a richer life won't do.

Great literature can't have emasculated creatures, yearning and despairing; rather, grand passionate figures dueling, drinking love potions, daring all for true love. Faithfulness in love even edges out marriage in value (remember Tristan?).

In case you don't know it, this is a distinctly Christian attitude. Remember; an ethical work of literature is art. Lust for life is the core.

Really! Mr. Fitch may not know it, but his problem is the nature of the *hero*. There lies his gripe with the contemporaries. There lies the clue to his love for innocent Romeo and hardly innocent Tristan. What happened to Christian ethics and literary criticism along the way?

BEVERLY KELSEY  
New Haven, Conn.

#### In Our Next Issue

PAUL DAVID DEVANANDAN writes of the impact of foreign aid on the social and cultural life of India.

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